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without full opportunity of proof, perhaps even of discussion. Such statements are arresting, provocative, therefore valuable to the informed reader, and questionable, therefore often dangerous to the uninformed. The following quotations will illustrate: "Der Kapitalismus mit seiner ausgebildeten, harten Kreditwirtschaft, seinem rast- und grenzenlosen Erwerbsstreben, ist ein Element jener geistigen Revolution, die sich im 13. Jahrhundert gegen die Kirche erhebt" (p. 57); "Ludwig XI. und Richard III. umgibt der Blutgeruch der italienischen Renaissance" (p. 270).

Both press-work and proof-reading are vastly better than in the preceding volume. Kaser has set a good standard for his own book on the period to 1789, probably now ready, and for the numerous other volumes projected for the series.

E. H. B.

Le Cardinal Nicholas de Cues, 1401-1464: l'Action, la Pensée.

Par EDMOND VANSTEENBERGHE, Docteur ès Lettres et en Théologie. (Paris: Édouard Champion. 1920. Pp. xix, 506. 35 fr.)

THIS biographical study of Nicholas of Cusa is of very timely interest to everyone who cares for historical analogies. Cusa's manifold activities were synchronous with the life of the Council of Basel and with the extraordinary reactions of European politics that followed it. The slower pace of political development as compared with the fevered rush of affairs to-day cannot conceal the striking similarities between that great Congress of Nations and the deliberations of the Powers since the armistice of 1918. Then as now there were vast programmes of reconstruction inspired by the loftiest idealism; there were prophets of a new time preaching the gospel of a triumphant democracy; and then as now there were the cruel facts of an unregenerate world blocking every specific reform and calling for "practical" measures of delay and compromise.

Nicholas of Cues, son of a Moselle bargeman, precocious scholar, Heidelberg student, doctor in canon law at Padua, secretary to a papal legate in Germany, ardent collector of classical manuscripts, and correspondent of all the chief Italian humanists, enthusiastic member of the Council of Basel and then its most determined opponent, finally cardinal of the reforming pope Nicholas V. and his most active agent in bringing the restless churches of the North into line with the papal policy—was the very embodiment of his time. Dr. Vansteenberghe has drawn for us a very attractive picture of his hero. It is sympathetic without being adulatory, critical in the best sense but not faultfinding. The book is divided into two main sections of almost precisely equal length, under the headings of "Action" and "Thought". In the former we are given a survey of Nicholas's course of life with especial emphasis upon those phases which distinctly characterize his relation to public events.

The central point of this presentation is, of course, the Council, Cusa's influence upon it, and its reaction upon his own views of polity both state and ecclesiastical. In the chapter headed the Programme of Action we have a very clever analysis of the famous treatise *De Concordantia Catholica*, probably the best known of Cusa's writings. Published in the second year of the Council and based upon the previous action of Constance, especially upon the principle there laid down that a general council is superior to a pope, this new presentation is made under the impression of the new difficulties that had arisen since the great peril of the Schism had been overcome. The war was over, the peace had been proclaimed; but how to apply the principles of 1415 to the actualities of 1431? It was in the effort to answer this question that Cusa found himself in a growing antagonism to the leaders at Basel, to the men with whom he had hoped to work in a permanent readjustment of European affairs.

He believed, as they did, in a reform of society from the bottom upward, but he was not prepared to go with them to the length of rejecting the sanctified authority of a divine head working from above downward. When it came to that, he and his Paduan master Caesarini could not hesitate. They threw over the Council and cast in their lot with the sorely pressed papal cause. Cusa became in truth the "Hercules of the Eugenists", laboring henceforth with unremitting zeal to bring back the wavering peoples of the North to their early loyalty.

As to the second, the intellectual side of Nicholas's activity, the interest of to-day is less vivid. If we seek for a word to classify him it would be, perhaps, "speculative physicist". His philosophy was that of unity in contradiction, and his present biographer has rather happily illustrated this by a continuous parallelism between his life of thought and his life of action. He sums it all up in the one characterization of his subject as above all else a "man of peace"—peace between the warring elements of human society, peace in the apparent conflicts of the world of phenomena and their reflection in the mind of man, and peace also in the individual soul between the allurements of passion and the highest leadings of the Christian intuition. Yet these various harmonies were to be attained only by unremitting warfare, and the heritage of Cusa was only a stimulation to renewed conflict leading on to the inevitable cleavage of the Protestant Revolution.

The value of Dr. Vansteenberghe's work is increased by several appendixes giving a very complete bibliography of Cusa's works, a chronological and topical index to his sermons, and an itinerary of his German legation.

E. EMERTON.